

First Strike, You're Out

AN
INTERVIEW
WITH
DANIEL
ELLSBERG

BY KEENEN PECK

Although he is best known for releasing The Pentagon Papers in 1971, Daniel Ellsberg is also a prominent peace activist and an expert in the field of nuclear strategy. He spent a decade as a high-level national security analyst for the Rand Corporation, the Defense Department, and the State Department. In 1961, he wrote the top-secret guidance for the Kennedy Administration's nuclear war planning; he reviewed the policy throughout the early 1960s.

Today, Ellsberg serves on the strategy task force of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign. He regularly takes part in demonstrations against the arms race and U.S. intervention in Central America. The day after I interviewed him, Ellsberg was arrested with nine others for attempting to blockade the CIA office in San Francisco.

Ellsberg and I talked for four hours at his home in the hills above Berkeley. The following is a condensed transcript of our session.

Q: Pollster Daniel Yankelovich has made a broad study of American attitudes toward nuclear war, and I understand that you've read his work and discussed it with him. Did his researchers discover major shifts in public opinion?

ELLSBERG: The change they find has essentially taken place since 1980, with a further change since 1982. It can be summed up this way: There is an overwhelming consensus—cutting across class, education, political party, age—that nuclear war cannot be won, cannot be limited, and possibly cannot be survived. All of these are new opinions, and, according to Yankelovich, they're deeply held and not easily swayed. And they're totally contradictory to what Ronald Reagan was suggesting early in his Administration.

While Yankelovich doesn't go into the cause of the change, it does appear from the timing that the public education that's gone on through the controversy of the last four years has had a major effect. The Freeze Campaign has done a huge job of public education, and the Physicians for Social Responsibility and a lot of groups working along parallel lines independently—they certainly have had an effect on public opinion. Of course, Reagan has been the principal single contributor to that; he scared people.

Reagan was doing his own polling during this period, by the way. He has greatly changed his rhetoric, so he really no longer says the sorts of things that he said before, nor does he seem to encourage people in his Administration to say them. They've all quieted down on whether we're going to win or survive a nuclear war. But that doesn't mean that any of his policies have changed at all.

Q: What else did Yankelovich find?

ELLSBERG: There is a great consensus that the United States should not initiate the use of nuclear weapons for any purpose whatever, even to avoid a takeover of Europe. That puts Americans at odds with our formal commitment to nuclear war in the event of an attack there. A large majority believes that it is already our policy not to initiate.

Yankelovich describes this as ignorance of our actual commitment, but it may not mean that. Some of the answers implied that a majority of Americans—and thus some of the same people who said they would not use nuclear weapons first—were prepared to risk nuclear war to prevent a communist takeover, even though they were saying a communist takeover would not justify the actual use. Yankelovich describes this as an inconsistency. I pointed out to him that it's

not inconsistent to say, "I would not explode nuclear weapons, but I would risk using nuclear weapons."

I asked Yankelovich's assistant whether they had investigated what I suspected would be the key question: What did people think about threatening the use of nuclear weapons? They had not asked that.

When I raised this at the Freeze convention, somebody had with him a poll from the Committee on the Present Danger, done for them by an independent polling agency. Where they asked the same questions, they got the same results as Yankelovich, but they also asked, "Would you threaten use of these weapons? Do you believe in assuring the Soviet Union that we would not use these nuclear weapons?" Here one found a majority of the people saying they did endorse threatening.

Now, much follows from that, because to threaten use of these weapons leads you to take steps to increase the credibility of your threats. By their nature, these steps are identical with the steps you would take if you had every intention of carrying out the threat. That's why you take the steps, in fact, to give that impression.

What the public wants, then, is a bluff. They do not want the threat carried out. But as far as the arms race goes, there's no difference between the policies when you're bluffing or when you actually mean it. Of course, expense matters to some extent, and conceivably you wouldn't pay as much to support a bluff as you would if you were fully intent on carrying it out. But from another point of view, the more you abhor nuclear war, the more concerned you are that this bluff be credible.

Q: So basically the peace movement has persuaded people of the dangers of nuclear war but not of the dangers of the nuclear arms race.

ELLSBERG: Exactly. And, after all, it is Reagan who says the way to avoid nuclear war is precisely to pursue the arms race in the way he is pursuing it. Certainly these public beliefs were in contrast to what Reagan had earlier been saying about nuclear war. But he stopped saying that, and the arms race continues. What's more, it continues in a way that



WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Daniel Ellsberg (left) undergoes arrest at a May protest against U.S. policy toward Nicaragua.

is consistent with these beliefs held by the public, which Reagan had now aligned himself with.

The trouble with our education efforts—in Physicians for Social Responsibility and in the Freeze—is we're tackling head-on Reagan's peculiar beliefs about nuclear war (which I think he sincerely did hold and probably still does), but his policies do not depend on those beliefs. Actually, his policies are pretty much those of Jimmy Carter in his last two years and, for that matter, of previous Presidents. Those Presidents didn't believe that nuclear war could be limited or won or survived, but they were buying the same weapons that Reagan does. Which is to say, if you've tempered Reagan's rhetoric, you haven't necessarily done anything about the arms race.

Q: It seems that the peace movement needs to offer an alternative to threats—to deterrence.

ELLSBERG: I think it's essential to use a distinction that isn't usually brought up—what Herman Kahn used to call Type I deterrence, or the deterrence of nuclear attack on the United States, and Type II (or what other people call "extended deterrence"), which is the deterrence of other challenges by the threat of initiating nuclear war.

In a world where nuclear weapons are possible, let alone where they already exist, the overwhelming majority of the American people believe that you must have the capability to deter attacks on the United States by the threat of retaliation. Many of my close associates are pacifists who reject the idea of any retaliation at all. I think that position is essentially limited to pacifists and always will be limited to a very small fraction of the American public. To adopt that position, if it's your only position, is to ensure limiting yourself to a number of people so small that it will have no effect whatever.

It would be a mistake, in my opinion, to say that to mount a logical and strong case against the arms race, one must give up deterrence (meaning giving up our ability to deter nuclear attack—Type I). I don't think you have to give that up.

Q: If the public insists on maintaining Type I deterrence, are we consigned to having at least a few thousand nuclear weapons?

ELLSBERG: I didn't give any figure, and thousands is an enormous figure.

Type I reflects a risk of Soviet attack that is almost entirely a creation of the first-strike pressure we pose to the Soviet Union. That creates for them an incentive to preempt, in some situations, which

they would not have if we were not threatening them tacitly with the possibility that we might strike first. If you removed the pressure on the Soviets to preempt by taking away our capability to strike first, then the requirements for deterring them are measured in handfuls, or dozens, of reliable, survivable warheads.

[Former Defense Secretary Robert] McNamara was talking about 400 one-megaton warheads being able to destroy the Soviet Union—a third to a half of their population, two-thirds of their industry, and so forth. That number would be on a single Trident submarine, although the warheads are smaller today. A couple of subs would get you there. McNamara's number was already arbitrary; it was enormously larger than was realistically needed. He arrived at that figure for reasons that had to do with rationalizing the then-current number of warheads. So you're not talking thousands, you're talking dozens of delivered warheads.

It's one of the great myths of our era—a lie worthy of Goebbels—that we buy weapons primarily or exclusively to deter an attack on the United States. It's never been true. Virtually all of the weapons we have ever bought have con-

sciously reflected the requirements of extended deterrence—that is, of threatening credibly to initiate nuclear war under various circumstances.

Q: How do we communicate that to the public?

ELLSBERG: What lies ahead is our need to educate the public on the relation between the arms race and our actual policies of threatening to initiate war—Type II deterrence. I can't say whether it's possible to change opinions on this subject, but I do know we haven't tried. I know that my wife, when she got into this subject a few years ago, was struck to realize that these weapons were related to defending U.S. interests far from our shores. (I'm talking about economic interests or strategic interests of various kinds.) The weapons were not regarded even in the Pentagon as necessary to protect us or deter attack on us.

She learned that, but most Americans believe we do not have a first-use policy. In a sense, that would be hopeful; it would suggest that there's a lot of room for education. But as I look at the whole body of data, I'm afraid we may well find out that the public isn't easily moved on this. I'm not so sure they're simply ignorant. Suppose what they're saying is, "We do not want the trigger pulled—we do not want the nuclear weapons exploded—but we do want them *threatened* to protect our interests, even though this somewhat increases the risks of war. We gain other rewards from it."

In their pastoral letter, the Catholic bishops very clearly denounced not only initiating nuclear war but also threatening to initiate it. They did that on the basis of an ethical principle: It is immoral to threaten—or risk—what it would be immoral to do. I conjecture strongly that the American public, including most Catholics, do not agree with that ethical principle. They're prepared to accept some risk to keep this country from going communist, to keep allies from going communist.

But I think the public underestimates the fact that the risks are increasing, partly because of the new weapons, partly because of proliferation, partly because of our intervention policies. In my opinion, the risks are greater than the peace movement thinks, they are greater than Reagan thinks, and they are greater than the public thinks.

Q: In what way does the peace movement underestimate the risk?

ELLSBERG: Let's think of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, the Arms Control Association, and Pugwash—three main-line arms control bodies which could be said to be on the dovish side of the arms control spectrum. Their emphasis has been summed up in one word: overkill. It's a simple concept; it's understandable by everybody.

I would say that message *has* gotten through, and that is pretty much the way the public understands it: We have more nuclear weapons than we need, we can get along with a lot fewer, and therefore, more are simply a waste of money. Avoiding waste isn't terribly urgent. After all, there are jobs involved in building the weapons; there are profits.

And the very notion of overkill accepts the idea that nuclear weapons are to be measured only by their contribution to deterring nuclear attack. The calculations are always based on what we could retaliate with in a second strike. But that's not what people who are committed to the arms race believe is the function of the weapons. The Pentagon is trying to keep the Soviets from challenging us—in Europe, the Middle East, the Far East, and elsewhere—by threatening to initiate nuclear war. Well, it's not easy to make that threat credible. Is 30,000 weapons really too many? Would 60,000 or 90,000 be too many? You can't have too many if that's really your effort.

What you basically have to deter is the Soviet Union extending a nuclear umbrella over its allies. We deter them by threatening to escalate against the Soviet Union, and that is very expensive.

So the overkill calculation is itself somewhat irrelevant or inadequate. It's like saying the Russians have more tanks than they need to suppress an uprising in Eastern Europe. How many is more than they need? What they're trying to do is deter an uprising in Eastern Europe. You can't have too many.

The overkill notion, then, doesn't address the real motivation for these weapons. It just misses the point of the support of these weapons—support that is broader than I would have hoped.

Q: George Kennan, former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, makes an argument similar to overkill—that these weapons have no use.

ELLSBERG: Kennan is basically on my side, and vice versa, but I'm not happy with how he (and sometimes McNamara) argue this. Kennan says, "There is no use for these weapons at all." Probably he means that they have no use other than to deter nuclear attack—so they do have one use. But let's say that's a short form and they have no use other than to deter nuclear attack.

That's not the way the Pentagon sees it, and I now discover that's not the way the public sees it. We've used them by threatening to use them. When you point a gun at someone's head in a confrontation, you are using the gun, whether or not you pull the trigger. The best use you could get out of it is to get your way without having to pull the trigger. That's generally why you buy the gun.

We have used our weapons at least a dozen times that way (aside from the

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general influence you get in the world just by having the gun on your hip). A dozen times, we actually have pulled it from our hip and pointed it and said, "One step further and you get it."

To emphasize that the weapons are unnecessary because they are utterly useless does not at all point one to the urgency of the situation. After all, if the risk of war comes from the mere existence of these weapons which are not usable, it isn't too persuasive that the world would be a lot safer with 20,000 weapons than with 45,000 weapons. (Kennan, for instance, talks about halving the stockpile.)

I believe the risk does not inhere in the mere existence of the weapons. The risk is much greater than that and derives from the nature of the weapons we have and from the nature of the weapons we are in the process of building—on both sides. And in the perceptions of vital interests, the intervention policies, and above all, the willingness to threaten and actually carry out threats of initiating nuclear war.

Q: We've threatened in Vietnam and in Korea. . . .

ELLSBERG: Several times in Korea, several times in Indochina, Berlin, Cuba, in the Middle East in 1973. I would also include the Carter Doctrine after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which was clearly intended to be a threat in that situation. [Carter vowed to use "any means necessary" to stop further Soviet moves in the Persian Gulf.]

I think if the public was aware that we've made the threat—and it wasn't a bluff, the tactical use—they would quickly see that these risks are being taken much more often than they can be comfortable with, and for purposes that they don't agree with. For instance, in the last thirty years, every time U.S. troops have been surrounded or allied troops have been surrounded and in danger of capture, there has been serious military and civilian consideration given to using nuclear weapons to protect those troops. The public doesn't realize that at all, and if they did, some of them would endorse it, but I think the majority would not.



PHILIP BURKE

They would look at it the way I looked on it when I was in the Marines [in 1954]: "It's nice to be protected, but I don't want to be protected by starting a nuclear war."

I'm not saying that we've had a President who was eager to experiment with nuclear weapons; but even the Presidents who were most reluctant to imagine using nuclear weapons found themselves in situations where they were contemplating the possible need. Kennedy thought the Cuban Missile Crisis had a one-third to one-half chance of leading to nuclear war. A nuclear war initiated by whom? The Soviets? He knew they had ten operational missiles at that time. (They had about seventy under construction.) We had thousands of bombers and several hundred missile warheads within range of Russia. We would have started the nuclear operations.

The public didn't begin to imagine that what we were talking about in the early 1960s was a U.S.-initiated nuclear war. But that was the case. Americans might never reject bluffs in principle. But they need to hear how often those bluffs get made. They have to have a different perception of their leaders' willingness to initiate tactical war.

Q: Essentially, you're saying Americans don't have a sense of their own history.

ELLSBERG: Well, that's not a criticism of them. The history has been kept secret, for good reason. In most cases, they didn't know nuclear weapons were an issue at all.

The Presidents never believed that the public would back them up in those instances. They might accept the idea in general, but for Quemoy [a nationalist-held island off mainland China]? For Khe Sanh [where U.S. Marines were pinned down by Vietnamese forces]? For Dien Bienphu [where the U.S. Government offered tactical nuclear weapons to the besieged French troops]? For the Chosin Reservoir [after Chinese troops surrounded U.S. Marines in Korea]?

Our Presidents have come close to using nuclear weapons—close in the sense that they passed the trigger to our opponents. Whether there would be an explosion was up to what our opponents did.

They were *not* bluffing. If the Chinese had attacked Quemoy, or if the blockade had been fully effective, I think Eisenhower would have done what he told the Joint Chiefs of Staff he intended to do—

he would have used nuclear weapons. That scares me, and I think it would scare a lot of people to know that we almost went to war over Quemoy, if the Chinese had not been mature enough, cautious enough, to back down. If the Chinese had been like Khomeini, let's say, we would have had a nuclear war.

I think the world is more risky than it used to be, and I think more risky than most people realize, and is about to become riskier still.

Q: What do you mean?

ELLSBERG: I know lots of people whose political values I respect and whose expertise is enormous who disagree with me on the urgency of this. They regard the current balance as very stable, they are impressed with the inhibitions on both sides against initiating nuclear war. They think that derives from the number of weapons on both sides—survivable weapons.

They do worry about proliferation and the possibility that "less mature" powers might be less inhibited, but even there, they see the basic strategic balance between the United States and the Soviet Union as so stable that it's unlikely that even use of weapons by a third power could set off the stockpiles. All these people would agree, to some extent, that the new weapons—like the MX in fixed silos or the Trident II—are undesirable. They think it's worth stopping them, but not worth risking their own careers, not worth risking their reputations for expertise, maturity, and good judgment. They have a certain agreement with the Pentagon—that the Pentagon is not strikingly increasing the risks to the world.

They don't know much about our war plans, people who think this way—the actual posture, the alerting procedures, the operational orientation of the Air Force. And they don't know the historical instances of past threats.

I'll give an example. In Daniel Ford's new book, *The Button*, he has come across something (by interviews) that I've known for twenty-five years, but that most people find startling: Not only are our plans basically first-strike plans, but the overwhelming orientation of our Air Force officers is that if a nuclear war is to occur, the United States must, and probably will, initiate the nuclear operations. We must get the first blow in.

Q: If that's been the case for twenty-five years, what now makes the danger qualitatively greater?

ELLSBERG: Because although this has always been the orientation of the officers, the fact is, by the late 1960s it would have made very little difference to get the first blow in. The tradition of emphasizing the first blow ran up against the fact that neither side could disarm the other to any significant degree.

The bulk of the forces on both sides

were beyond the reach of the other side. The missiles were not numerous enough or accurate enough or large enough to destroy the other side's hardened missiles. The Soviets could not get our submarines at all, and we could get only a fraction of theirs. But we could still be facing their entire land-based force.

Here are the various stages that we've gone through: For the first twenty years or so of the nuclear era, the United States had an ability to disarm the Soviet Union in a first strike. The Soviet Union had no ability to disarm the United States. We could do that until the Soviets began to harden their missiles, starting in 1964 and 1965, and by the late 1960s, the Soviets had large numbers of hardened missiles plus a significant number of submarines. So neither side had the ability to disarm the other.

Then we went through a period that looked at the time as if it could last forever, a time of great stability—the way people see things now. You couldn't disarm the other. MIRV [multiple warheads] alone didn't change that when we started MIRVing our missiles in early 1970. But the combination of MIRV and accuracy did change that. To show how recent that is, it wasn't until 1977 that we began installing the Mark 12A warhead, with the NS-20 guidance system, for the advanced Minuteman III (which was the first hard silo-buster on either side). The Soviets didn't begin to install warheads of comparable accuracy—the so-called SS-18 Model IV—until 1981.

The situation we are in now is that each side can destroy a significant fraction of the other side's retaliatory capability—something between a third and a half. That means that each side would still leave about two-thirds of the other side's warheads. So the situation is still quite stable, though not as stable as it was fifteen years ago, when neither side could get any significant degree of the other side's warheads. In a crisis today, either side—if you had strong reason to believe that the other side might strike you—would have some incentive to get there first and get what you could get.

Q: Where is the arms race going?

ELLSBERG: That's the really dangerous part. With a combination of Trident II and MX and Pershing II, plus our anti-submarine warfare, one side—namely, the United States—would again have total coverage of the other side's retaliatory capability. (We have a sizable antisubmarine ability; the Soviets don't, and won't any time soon.)

This does not mean if we went first we would get all or even nearly all of their capability. Surely a lot of warheads would survive, for a lot of reasons. But it does mean you could target them all, and you would have some chance of getting most or all of them. We are going to get into

a situation where one side will have an ability to target the whole opposing force, even submarines, and the other side will have not as large, but a sizable first-strike capability—what they have now, essentially. That's where we're heading.

What makes such a situation unstable is the possibility that one side will fear that the other may be about to strike. It then has a strong incentive to preempt. That fear would not occur from day to day under normal circumstances, but in a crisis, or where a war was going on, the fear would arise (particularly where nuclear weapons had been exploded by somebody—a third party or the other side).

Fifteen years ago, if a weapon went off, there would be no reason to believe that the other side would strike first because it had no incentive to do so. And even if you thought they were going to strike first, you had no strong incentive to preempt them because there wasn't much you could do to the other side's forces. That is different today: There is something you can do, and it's true for both sides. There is some plausibility that the other side might be striking.

If we get an alarm on our radar screens today, it will be doubted. People will say, "This can't be happening because the Russians would be crazy to do it. Let's check it." But there will be less doubt than there would have been ten years ago. And ten years from now, there will be a lot less doubt. What Tom Schelling called the "reciprocal fear of surprise attack," which he analyzed in the early 1960s, is now about to be applicable.

We've never been tested on this situation. It was expected to arrive in the late 1950s or early 1960s, and people were very afraid of it. They were right to be afraid of it, but it didn't arrive. And now it is arriving in an era with very large numbers of weapons on both sides, unlike the early 1960s.

Some would say, "Maybe it doesn't matter, after all; maybe you can get the bulk of the weapons, but the other side's are so large, what difference will it make anyway?" The trouble is, they're looking at the fact that it's stable in peacetime, and they're unaware of how close we have actually come to using some nuclear weapons in crises or limited wars. Their belief is that U.S. Presidents are far more inhibited than they have been.

If you understand that weapons are much more likely to go off than you realized, then these new weapons are more dangerous than you realize.

Q: To the extent that peace activists recognize the new danger, they seem to direct their energy against individual weapons systems—the MX, the Trident.

ELLSBERG: The difficulty in making any change in the process—the policy, the arms, anything—is now evident. And so

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one has to sympathize with the people who urge that we make our aims as narrow or achievable as possible. The Freeze movement was an attempt to go beyond that.

The people who in all good conscience led the fight against, say, the MX—my impression is that many of them never did grasp the point of the Freeze, which was that it's essential to go against the whole broad range of weapons. Only that way could you get enough public pressure to accomplish something.

But then again, it may well be that the Freeze asked for too much, and that there's something in between. I don't say this to second guess. Rather, now that we know unmistakably after the MX votes and Reagan's reelection how far we are from achieving literally anything, I think we have to reevaluate strategy. From that point of view, the emphasis we put on stopping the production of nuclear weapons (in addition to the testing and deployment) was vulnerable to a Pentagon and Reagan counterattack on the issue of verifiability.

We were confident that ultimately everything was verifiable. We have not convinced the public or even the arms control community; it's very hard to prove. And in any case, you can't verify everything at the outset of negotiations, so the whole approach is vulnerable to the counter—Reagan's point—that if you're going to take a long time on negotiations, why don't you go for reductions? (Meanwhile, as he's negotiating he simply proceeds to build.)

What is verifiable right now is the testing of nuclear warheads and the flight testing of ballistic missiles. A lot of aspects of production are verifiable in the short run. Take the production of weapons-grade bomb material: You could verify it for a moratorium period, but it's also true that over a longer period, they could produce it covertly in new places that would be hard to verify. If you were trying to stop this indefinitely, you would almost surely need on-site inspection.

Cruise missiles, too, can be produced at many places. It would be hard to verify



that without on-site inspection. Also, testing of cruise missiles is, unfortunately, quite hard to verify. It looks like a small plane on the surveillance screen.

Q: So what would you propose?

ELLSBERG: An immediate moratorium on the testing of nuclear warheads and the flight testing of ballistic missiles would stop the greatest and most dangerous part of the arms race (except for cruise missiles). Cold. On a totally verifiable basis. And during that moratorium we'd have negotiations that would stop everything.

There's a still more constricted measure that would be more likely to get passed: a ban on the testing of new MIRVed missiles, land and sea, as well as nuclear warheads. That would not be a Freeze because it would allow a Midgetman-type missile on either side—a single-warhead missile. It would rule out the MX, the Trident II on both sides, and the SS-24, the MX-type missile on the Soviet side.

What I would like to see the Soviet Union do is announce tomorrow or next month—before August 6, the fortieth anniversary of Hiroshima—that they *have* stopped the testing of warheads and new MIRVed missiles, and invite the United

States to do the same. They could say they will not renew if the United States tests after six months.

Why the Soviet Union? Well, Reagan isn't going to do it. It's in the Soviets' interest; it's in line with proposals they have made. I'm suggesting they actually stop instead of talking about stopping.

Why not a total Freeze? My sense is that Congress would not fight the President on that. A number of Senators have convinced themselves that the reason they don't like the Freeze is that it wouldn't allow Midgetman. But a proposal by the Soviets that allowed Midgetman would put great pressure on Congress to fight the President.

If we could stop the MX and the Trident II and, in that context, go after the cruise missile—that would be a vast improvement in the situation. Midgetman is not destabilizing in itself (it's a waste of money, yes), and it might keep the Air Force happy to some degree, Congress happy, and the military-industrial complex happy building single-warhead missiles. I would prefer not to have Midgetman, but if that's the price of stopping the MX and Trident II, it would be more than worthwhile.

Q: In the absence of such a Soviet proposal, what can the U.S. peace movement do?

ELLSBERG: We should make a comparable proposal. We can make stronger proposals in the hope that Congress will support this idea, but unless the political situation changes in some unforeseeable way, I do not have much optimism about getting that out of Congress. If the Soviets changed the context of politics and discussion by unilaterally stopping testing, I think that would make things possible over here that are otherwise not possible.

Q: And in the meantime, what about public education?

ELLSBERG: More of the same will not do it. More emphasis on the horrors of nuclear war will not help the situation and, in fact, is really irrelevant at this point, because the public does have that message almost universally. It has to be something different, and I think it has to be along the lines of our actual first-use policy (which goes beyond Europe), the effect of our first-use policy on the arms build-up, and the way in which these particular types of new weapons increase the risk.

I think there is some chance of a deliberate Soviet first strike on the United States today. There wasn't fifteen years ago. I'm not referring to a strike out of the blue—a Pearl Harbor attack—but rather an escalation of an ongoing conflict. We are, in fact, in greater danger, and that means these new weapons on both sides have lowered our security. The weapons we'll have ten years from now will make the chance of a Soviet attack in a crisis even greater.

And I'm saying Americans don't see the likelihood that our nuclear bluff will be called. We are preparing an interventionary force to go all over the world that will be at risk. I've called the Rapid Deployment Force a portable Dienbienphu, a portable Khe Sanh. You dare the other guy to surround you. We've confronted a lot of enemies who dared that, even when we had a monopoly on nuclear weapons. Everybody can see that confronting a Khomeini, or an Iraq for that matter, does not give you that degree of deterrence.

To be honest, as opposed to inspirational, I think it's going to be a very hard task to change public attitudes. It's rarely as discouraging as it is at this moment. The public will in principle accept even the idea of threatening nuclear weapons. If they're going to change their basic willingness to intervene, I think it's going to be because they see that this old policy—which is basically an imperial policy, though we have been trained from birth to reject that word for ourselves—has become more dangerous than it ever was before. ■

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Ellsberg Amplifies

A discussion with Sidney Lens has made me aware that my interview in *The Progressive* ("First Strike, You're Out," July issue) may give—by omission—a misleading impression of my views on long-range goals for the peace movement. These are not, in fact, discussed anywhere in the interview. My fragmentary comments there on movement policy deal *only* with immediate, short-run objectives, essentially relating to Ronald Reagan's second term.

Over the longer run, I continue to believe in the necessity of multilateral disarmament—spurred by unilateral initiatives—leading toward the abolition of nu-

clear weapons. It is not at all my own view that "stable deterrence" at any level provides a permanent solution to the dangers nuclear weapons pose to humanity. As I have often stated, I believe that human beings cannot coexist indefinitely with nuclear weapons; eventually, either they go or we go.

It is not enough, however, to proclaim only goals so distant that Reagan can claim to share them. We must also urgently bring informed pressure to bear on the course of disarmament, including the sequence of reduction. All nuclear weapons are dangerous to life on Earth, but some are much more immediately dangerous than others. A course of unilateral and mutual steps on the path to abolition should

begin, I believe, by preventing or destroying those systems that pose the greatest risks.

In addition to preventing new dangers from arising under Reagan—such as new MIRVed missiles on either side or treaty-busting Star Wars tests—we should be educating the public and Congress to the urgent need to eliminate whole classes of the most dangerous weapons as soon as possible (which probably means, at best, under a new President). This would include, on both sides, elimination of MIRVed missiles, nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles, intermediate-range missiles, and tactical or "battlefield" nuclear weapons of all types.

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